TENNESSEE

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AGRICULTURAL
STATISTICS SERVICE

# *Agri-News*

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## SUMMER DROUGHT TAKES TOLL ON TENNESSEE AGRICULTURE

During 1999, farmers across Tennessee watched as one of the most promising growing seasons in years turned abruptly dismal due to a long summer drought. All hopes of record-breaking yields quickly disappeared as the number of days without rain continued to mount. Both crops and pastures baked in constant, relentless, extreme heat and drought. The State's soybeans seem to have been the hardest hit. Soybean yields averaged only 18 bushels an acre, well below the five-year average and the lowest yield in the State since 1983. Gene Danekas, State Statistician for Tennessee explained the low yields by saying, "The lack of moisture last summer led to a very light pod set and poor pod fill. Farmers reported that beans were quite small with some less than half the normal size." The State's cotton crop was also adversely affected by the drought, but overall production was up from 1998 due to a 27 percent increase in harvested acreage. Yields for corn and burley tobacco were actually up from the previous year, despite being below earlier expectations.

## 1999 WAS A DISASTROUS YEAR FOR TENNESSEE SOYBEANS

Ideal weather conditions in the Spring allowed soybean planting to progress ahead of normal during 1999 and allowed the plants to get off to an excellent start. Crop conditions throughout the State remained mostly good up until August, when the lack of moisture and extreme heat began taking its toll on the crop. Relentless hot and dry weather throughout the remainder of the growing season caused the once promising crop to take an abrupt turn for the worse. Final soybean yield, at 18 bushels an acre, was well below 1998's yield of 29 bushels and the five-year average of 33 bushels. With such poor yield potential, a greater than normal amount of the 1.25 million acres planted was not harvested for beans and was either cut for hay or abandoned. Total production from the 1.19 million harvested acres, at 21.4 million bushels, was down 39 percent from 1998 and the lowest production since 1966 .

## TRANSPLANTING DATE KEY TO TOBACCO IN 1999

The dates of transplanting and the timing of rainfall were the main factors affecting tobacco yields in 1999. Farmers who transplanted their tobacco in early May reported excellent to average yields, while later set tobacco had only average yields, or in extreme situations a total loss. The reason for the difference was that the late tobacco baked in the hot, dry conditions while the early to mid-season tobacco benefitted from timely rains. Burley growers produced 92.8 million pounds in 1999 with an average yield of 1,820 pounds per acre, 25 pounds more than in 1998 but slightly below the five-year average. Type 22 and Type 23 dark fire-cured tobacco yields were 2,150 and 2,200 pounds per acre, respectively. Type 22, eastern dark fire-cured production at 15.3 million pounds, was 11 percent below the previous year. Type 23, western dark fire-cured production, at 1.25 million, was 15 percent below 1998. Type 35, dark air-cured production, at 1.23 million pounds, was 15 percent above a year earlier. Curing conditions were less than desirable during 1999 and led to delays in preparing the tobacco crop for market. The good news is that some of the tobacco, which was cut early because of drought-stress, improved in quality during October.

## COTTON PRODUCTION SLIGHTLY UP FROM PREVIOUS YEAR

Despite wet field conditions early, most cotton growers were able to plant their crop sooner than normal. The majority of the crop was rated in good-to-excellent condition until the end of July, due to ideal growing conditions. The main problem in 1999, however, was the yield reducing effects of the relentless dry August weather which caused poor boll development and higher than normal boll shed. Growers reported that August was one of the poorest growing months they had ever seen. As a result, Tennessee's cotton yield averaged 501 pounds of lint per acre, well below 1998's yield of 589 pounds and the five-year average of 623 pounds. Poor prices, coupled with the marginal quality, discouraged a second picking; a practice that normally boosts yields significantly. Harvest of this year's crop was nearly a month ahead of normal and the earliest completion date on record since official records began in 1969. Total production from the 565,000 harvested acres, at 590,000 bales, was 44,000 bales more than was produced during 1998.

**(OVER)**

## CORN YIELDS HIGHLY VARIABLE

Ideal weather through mid-July provided for adequate pollination for the majority of the State's corn crop and producers were optimistic for better than average yields. Fortunately, most corn had developed before the drought began, but some later planted fields did suffer adversely. Final average yield, at 102 bushels per acre, was up six bushels from 1998 but 8 bushels below the five-year average. Total production was 58.1 million bushels from 570,000 acres harvested for grain, the lowest productions since 1993. An additional 55,000 acres were cut for silage with an average yield of 14 tons per acre.

## HAY PRODUCTION DOWN DUE TO DROUGHT

Farmers reported that the first cutting of hay the Spring of 1999 was excellent in Tennessee, but additional cuttings were limited by the extremely dry conditions. Alfalfa production was 93,000 tons from 30,000 acres, 22 percent less than was produced in 1998. All other hay production was 3.70 million tons from 1.85 million acres, 4 percent below 1998. Due to poor pasture conditions, many cattle producers started feeding hay around the first of August, well ahead of normal. As a result, hay stocks on December 1 are estimated at 2.66 million tons, the lowest since 1993.

## 2000 WHEAT ACREAGE UP 16 PERCENT

Tennessee farmers seeded 580,000 acres of winter wheat this past fall, up 80,000 from the fall of 1998. Ideal conditions this fall for seeding, record yields during 1999, and favorable prices appear to be the main factors in the increase in acreage. Planting of the 2000 crop was completed by the end of November, slightly ahead of normal. Ninety-one percent of the crop had emerged by this time and it was rated as being in mostly good to fair condition.

**CROP ESTIMATES: TENNESSEE AND UNITED STATES, FINAL 1999, WITH COMPARISONS** [1]

| Crop | Unit | Harvested Acres | | Yield Per Acre | | Production | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1998 | 1999 | 1998 | 1999 | 1998 | 1999 |
| | | Thousands | | Number of Units | | Thousands | |
| **TENNESSEE** | | | | | | | |
| Apples | lb. | --- | --- | --- | --- | 12,500 | 12,000 |
| Corn for grain | bu. | 620 | 570 | 96 | 102 | 59,520 | 58,140 |
| Corn for silage | ton | 65 | 55 | 14 | 14 | 910 | 770 |
| Cotton[2] | lb. | 445 | 565 | 589 | 501 | 546 | 590 |
| Grain Sorghum | bu. | 16 | 18 | 70 | 70 | 1,120 | 1,260 |
| Sorghum for silage | ton | 2 | 1 | 15 | 10 | 30 | 10 |
| Hay, All | ton | 1,785 | 1,880 | 2.22 | 2.02 | 3,969 | 3,793 |
| Alfalfa | ton | 35 | 30 | 3.40 | 3.10 | 119 | 93 |
| All Other | ton | 1,750 | 1,850 | 2.20 | 2.00 | 3,850 | 3,700 |
| Peaches | lb. | --- | --- | --- | --- | 3,200 | 5,000 |
| Soybeans | bu. | 1,210 | 1,190 | 29 | 18 | 35,090 | 21,420 |
| Tobacco, All | lb. | 59.415 | 59.270 | 1,870 | 1,866 | 111,100 | 110,569 |
| E. Dark-fired (22) | lb. | 7.300 | 7.100 | 2,330 | 2,150 | 17,009 | 15,265 |
| W. Dark-fired (23) | lb. | 0.590 | 0.570 | 2,500 | 2,200 | 1,475 | 1,254 |
| Burley (31) | lb. | 51.000 | 51.000 | 1,795 | 1,820 | 91,545 | 92,820 |
| One-sucker (35) | lb. | 0.525 | 0.600 | 2,040 | 2,050 | 1,071 | 1,230 |
| Winter Wheat | bu. | 370 | 340 | 41 | 54 | 15,170 | 18,360 |
| **UNITED STATES** | | | | | | | |
| Apples | lb. | --- | --- | --- | --- | 11,387,400 | 10,614,800 |
| Corn for grain | bu. | 72,589 | 70,537 | 134.4 | 133.8 | 9,758,685 | 9,437,337 |
| Corn for silage | ton | 5,913 | 6,062 | 16.1 | 15.9 | 95,479 | 96,169 |
| Cotton[2] | lb. | 10,683.6 | 13,381.0 | 625 | 608 | 13,918.2 | 16,952.9 |
| Grain Sorghum | bu. | 7,723 | 8,544 | 67.3 | 69.7 | 519,933 | 595,166 |
| Sorghum for Silage | ton | 308 | 320 | 11.4 | 11.6 | 3,526 | 3,716 |
| Hay, All | ton | 60,076 | 63,160 | 2.53 | 2.52 | 151,780 | 159,077 |
| Alfalfa | ton | 23,672 | 23,985 | 3.48 | 3.50 | 82,310 | 83,924 |
| All other | ton | 36,404 | 39,175 | 1.91 | 1.92 | 69,470 | 75,153 |
| Peaches | lb. | --- | --- | --- | --- | 2,429,300 | 2,502,100 |
| Soybeans | bu. | 70,441 | 72,476 | 38.9 | 36.5 | 2,741,014 | 2,642,908 |
| Tobacco, All | lb. | 717.605 | 644.250 | 2,062 | 1,980 | 1,479,867 | 1,275,438 |
| E. Dark-fired (22) | lb. | 11.150 | 10.850 | 2,325 | 2,167 | 25,922 | 23,515 |
| W. Dark-fired (23) | lb. | 4.190 | 4.120 | 2,762 | 2,545 | 11,573 | 10,484 |
| Burley (31) | lb. | 307.100 | 300.400 | 1,896 | 1,812 | 582,336 | 544,202 |
| One-sucker (35) | lb. | 2.975 | 3.450 | 2,238 | 2,133 | 6,657 | 7,358 |
| Winter Wheat | bu. | 40,126 | 35,572 | 46.9 | 47.8 | 1,880,733 | 1,699,989 |

[1] Data are from the latest estimates available, either from the current report or previous reports. [2] Production in 480-lb. Net weight bales.

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